

REMARKS

Applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for the attention accorded to the instant application.

Claims 1-2, 4-9 and 16-19 were pending in the application. Applicant has amended claims 1, 6 and 16. Claims 2 and 4-5 were in this canceled and new claims 20 and 21 are presented. Therefore, claims 1, 6-9 and 16-21 remain pending in this application. No new matter is being added.

The Examiner has variously rejected all of the pending claims based on of U.S. Patent No. 5,967,577 to Bhandarkar et al. ("Bhandarkar"), U.S. Patent No. 3,809,506 to Malcosky ("Malcosky"), U.S. Patent No. 4,858,975 to Ogawa ("Ogawa"), U.S. Patent No. 6,336,492 to Nagaoka ("Nagaoka"), and U.S. Patent No. 2,572,640 to Lovegrove ("Lovegrove").

Applicant have amended claims 1 and 16 to more particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter regarded as the invention. Applicant has amended claim 1 to recite at least one intermediate level between the holding surface level and the suction surface level, wherein the openings of the intermediate level are larger than the openings at the holding surface level and smaller than the openings at the suction surface level, whereby n levels are provided including the sum of the total number of levels including the holding level, the surface level and the intermediate levels,

wherein the openings at the holding surface level create a periodic pattern which is characterized by a frequency which is greater than the frequency of the periodic pattern of openings at the suction surface level,

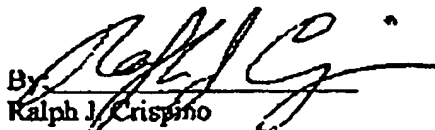
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wherein each level has a characteristic thickness defining a length of the openings therein  $t_n$ , and a period  $p_n$ , wherein are substantially equivalent to each other.

These features in combinations with the other features of claims 1 and 16 are not disclosed or suggested by the cited references.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims are now in condition for allowance. Early notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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